(AAI) has incurred an expenditure of Rs. 31.30 crores during the first three years of this Plan, on expansion and modification of terminal building and strengthening of runway. The work of the terminal building is expected to be completed by December, 2000 and runway by December, 2001.

(d) Airline operators are free to decide about the purchase, stationing and operation of their aircraft, subject to the Route dispersal guidelines which specify certain minimum operations to areas like the North-East.

(e) Guwahati airport has already been declared as international airport. No foreign airline has so far requested for Guwahati airport as a point of call.

Night Landing facility at Visakhapatnam Airport

157. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether night landing facility at the Visakhapatnam airport has been introduced to bring foreign tourists; and

(b) if not by when it is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) In view of the obstruction due to surrounding hills, civil aircraft operations can not be permitted after sunset at Visakhapatnam airport.

Improvement of AI's Efficiency

158. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last 35 years, many airlines have used advanced technology and management methods for improving productivity of aircraft, labour and fuel and the benefits of this have been passed on to passenger by offering lower fares;

(b) whether it is a fact that strategy makes it near impossible for inefficient airlines to compete; and

(c) if so, how does AI with its poor record of efficiency and low rate of productivity, hope to compete with such airlines?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) It is a fact that aviation industry has seen advancement in technology in the last thirty five years. Air India too has taken steps to keep pace with the changes.

Every carrier in order to get its market share offers competitive fares. The level of international fares is determined by various factors like cost of operation, volume of traffic, level of competition etc. When market fares are reduced by foreign airlines, Air India match these fares to the extent possible to maintain their market share.

VRS Scheme for AI

159. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any effective steps to check the operating losses of Air India;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have decided any wage out or VRS scheme for Air India;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Government have taken any decision to disinvest Air India and Indian Airlines; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) Air India Limited has taken the following steps to improve the financial performance:—

(i) Marketing efforts have been stepped up to generate additional revenue.

(ii) Network rationalisation and consolidation with emphasis placed on route profitability.

(iii) Reduction in expenditure on outside repairs of aircraft by undertaking more in-house repairs.

(iv) Several posts of India based officers abroad have been abolished.

(v) Freeze on external recruitment in non-operational categories.

(vi) Two voluntary schemes have been notified, viz. shorter working week scheme and leave without pay/allowance scheme for a period of two years extendable upto five years.